intend to pass up our opportunity". Tory supporters in Quebec "can look forward to being on the receiving end of government work and service contracts", he went on. One of his mandates would be to "reward our friends".

For good measure LaSalle noted that Liberals appointed to boards, commissions and the like would be replaced by Tories (in his words "friends of our party") when their terms ran out. "That is the political way in Canada."

How easily one forgets.
(The Calgary Albertan, May 15, 1980)

Small suggests that the Conservatives' denunciation of patronage is not to be taken seriously. He is not, surely, contending that Liberal patronage is all right, because the Conservatives who are denouncing it were firm supporters of patronage when they themselves were in power. ❋

FOOTNOTES

[1]Cf. John Woods and Douglas Walton, "Ad Hominem", The Philosophical Forum, 1977. These authors distinguish three different types of tu quoque, only one of which is tu quoque in the sense I attend to here. They refer to this type as involving "deontic-praxiological inconsistency", say that it can sometimes constitute a good argument which will successfully shift the burden of proof, and report an interesting old dispute between Whately and De Morgan on one particular case. They themselves offer no account as to why the "correct" cases are correct, or what differentiates them from the incorrect ones.

[2]I dealt with this issue in a preliminary way in "Credibility and Fallacy: Thoughts on Ad Hominem", presented at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings in Montreal in June, 1980.

Charity Begins at Home

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Some Reflections on the Principle of Charity

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent works on informal logic have made reference to something called The Principle of Charity. So far as I am aware, the first mention of this principle is to be found in Thomas's Practical Reasoning in Natural Language (1973):

1] When you encounter a discourse containing no inference indicators which you think may nevertheless contain an argument, stop and consider very carefully whether such an interpretation is really justifiable. . . . A good rule to follow is "the Principle of Charity": If a passage contains no inference indicators or other explicit signs of reasoning and the only possible argument(s) you can locate in it would involve obviously bad reasoning, then characterize the discourse as "non-argument." (9)

Thomas construes the Principle of Charity as a rule to be used in deciding whether or not a given passage is to be categorized as an argument.

The next mention that I'm aware of comes from Baum's Logic (1975):

2] The missing premise in this example is "Fido is a dog." A general rule of thumb for supplying missing premises is to add whatever premises are needed to make the argument as good as possible. The rule is sometimes referred to as the principle of charity.

Baum construes the Principle of Charity as a rule to be followed when adding missing premises to an argument.

One of the most complete discussions of the principle is to be found in Scriven's Reasoning (1976), from which the next two passages are excerpted:

3] Now it's time to introduce you to what we might call the ethics of argument analysis. The dominant principle here is what we can call the Principle of Charity. The Principle of Charity requires that we make the best, rather than the worst, possible interpretation of the material we're studying. (71)

Here the scope of the principle--not actually formulated--is very broad, for it covers every phase of argument analysis. However, Scriven very quickly narrows the focus and trains his sights on criticism:

4] The Principle of Charity is more than a mere ethical principle, but it is at least that. It requires that you be fair or just in your criticisms. They can be expressed in heated terms, if that is appropriate; they may involve conclusions about the competence, intellectual level, or conscientiousness of the person putting forward the argument, all of which may well be justified in certain cases. But your criticisms shouldn't be unfair; they shouldn't take advantage of a mere slip of the tongue or make a big point out of some irrelevant point that wasn't put quite right.

This brief survey has turned up four different formulations of the Principle of Charity, and that leads to my first point: there appears to be no one principle that informal logicians have in mind when they refer to "the

Principle of Charity." It is true that a common thread runs through the various formulations: the idea that one must be fair (charitable) in one's treatment of the argument.

In Part II of what follows, I offer a treatment of the Principle of Charity that resolves these apparent discrepancies. In Part III, I consider some difficulties that arise when one applies the principle. Finally, in Part IV, I propose a restriction on the use of the principle.

II. THE PRINCIPLE(S) OF CHARITY

We have noted that it appears that there is not one Principle of Charity, but rather at least four of them. The solution is an obvious one. Let us take 3] as the basic principle and the others as its corollaries: that is, as applications of the basic principle to the various levels of argument analysis.

Following Scriven, then, I propose that the following be taken as the principle of charity:

> The Principle of Charity which governs all levels of argument analysis is that the critic should provide the best possible interpretation of the material under consideration.

The justification of the principle is, as Scriven indicates in his treatment of it, ethical. One is under the general obligation to be fair in one's dealing with others, and this applies no less to logical than to commercial or interpersonal transactions. There is also a prudential reason for adhering to the principle, as Scriven notes when he writes:

> It tells you that you want to interpret the argument's meaning in whatever way makes the most sense and force out of it, because otherwise, it can easily be reformulated slightly in order to meet your objections. (72)

Finally, it may be argued that adherence to the Principle will force the critic to rise to the highest possible level in criticism and thereby prevent nit-picking.

However, as formulated, the Principle of Charity is very broad in scope. By applying the Principle to the various levels of argument analysis, we wind up with several more specific (and, I think, useful) applications of it, which I propose to call its corollaries.

Whatever method of argument analysis one subscribes to, it is likely that it must include at least the following three steps, each of which will have its own corollary.

1) Identification of the argument. The first step in argument analysis must be to decide whether or not the passage under scrutiny contains an argument. Those who have worked any length of time with real arguments know how difficult this can be. People do not always signal their intent in unambiguous terms. Indeed, the art of constructing a well-organized and completely expressed argument appears to be on the decline. Instead, we find ourselves confronted time and again with amorphous passages which hint broadly rather than point explicitly at the presence of an argument.

In dealing with such material, the Principle of Charity requires that we give the writer the benefit of the doubt. Hence we arrive at something like 1] as a corollary:

> Corollary I: If a passage contains no argument indicators or other explicit signs of argument, and the only possible argument(s) you can locate in it would involve obviously bad reasoning, then characterize the passage as non-argument. (Thomas's principle)

An example of the use of this corollary can be seen in the case of the letter that follows:

> I just returned from the doctor where he discovered I had high blood pressure. He said we have to find its cause. I said forget it, I know why it's high. Every time I read the sportspage and see another "athlete" signed for another $1 million my blood pressure goes up.
>
> Forget this old theory about limited earning-power years. All you need now is one year under these pay conditions. Even the minimum salaries are getting to be way more than the average working stiff is making.
>
> I don't blame the players. It just bugs me the money they get for playing a child's game. In my mind they are no longer athletes but well-paid employees of big business in the entertainment field.

If we take this passage to be an argument, then the reasoning in it is obviously bad. Thus, in accordance with the corollary, we classify this as "non-argument"--a verdict which squares with the intended ironic tone.

2) Reconstruction of the argument. Once a passage has been identified as containing an argument, we are then faced with the task of identifying and setting forth its premises and conclusion(s) in their logical relationships. We are also confronted with the job of clearing away what I call "clutter." For real arguments almost always contain various kinds of extraneous material: asides, information presented for background, explanation, bits of sarcasm, irony and humour, and other rhetorical flourishes. This clutter must be pared away so that the logical skeleton is exposed. Here another corollary comes into play:

> Corollary II: If a sub-section of a passage already identified as an argument contains obviously bad reasoning and if it can be interpreted as "clutter" (extraneous to the argument), then one should disregard that sub-section in the final analysis.

Here is an example, from an editorial which appeared in the Windsor Star (1977) in response to a proposal made by a councilman that cats be licensed:

> Cats are free spirits, the last really independent creatures around. You can no more license cats than you can license the wind. Dogs may submit to bureaucracy. Cats won't. The same spirit tends to rub off on cat owners. They have enough trouble being pushed around by their cats without being asked to submit to man-made laws. Besides, there's an economic factor. They've never had to buy licenses, so why start? No . . . it just won't work.

I have assigned this passage as an exercise for my students for a number of years. Nasty fellow that I am, I give it to them while we are studying the fallacy of faulty analogy. You may imagine the result: a great many of them interpret the entire passage as an argument, and file a charge of faulty analogy against the second sentence. This sort of interpretation has bizarre consequences. Students find themselves saying ridiculous things, such as: "The analogy is faulty because the wind is not a thing and cannot be owned." I try to point out that such reasoning is ludicrous, if meant to be a criticism of the passage. In line with the corollary, we must assume that the editorialist is a somewhat sensible person and that he or she is here trying to be funny or amusing. In fact, the corollary here suggests that the argument here only commences with the last three sentences, the rest being clutter.

Another facet of argument reconstruction is supplying missing premises. Most real arguments are not fully expressed arguments. Inferences and claims are left unstated, and these need to be articulated during the reconstruction. In so doing, we must again apply the Principle of Charity, committing the arguer to the weakest statement required to make the link explicit:

> Corollary III: In supplying missing premises to an argument, one should add the weakest possible candidate sufficient to express the unstated premise.

Suppose we have an argument that boils down to the following ingredients:

> Premise: X is a person of bad character.
>
> Conclusion: X's views about the press and the media are invalid.

There are two possible candidates for the required missing premise:

> MP_1: A person of bad character cannot hold any true views.
>
> MP_2: A person of bad character cannot hold any valid views about the press and the media.

While neither of the two candidates has much inherent plausibility, MP_2 is the weaker of the two and hence according to this corollary is the one we should supply.

3) Criticism of the argument. Once the argument has been identified, extracted, and reconstructed, the job of the critic can begin. The basic obligation dictated by the Principle of Charity is to go to the heart of the matter: one should look for the strongest possible criticisms of the argument and these should be featured in one's critique. One should not allow oneself to get sidetracked by secondary or peripheral matters.

> Corollary IV: In criticizing an argument, one should concern oneself with the most significant flaws in the argument and feature those in the critique.

My own suggestion would be that we refer to Corollary IV as "The Principle of Discrimination," since the crucial commodity involved in its application is the capacity of the critic to distinguish stronger from weaker lines of possible criticism.

We have seen, then, that what the recent literature has identified in various wordings as the Principle of Charity turns out to be one basic principle and its corollaries, each of which comes into play at a different level of argument analysis.

So far, so good. In presenting the principle and its corollaries, however, we have simplified the situation. Now it is time to look at some of the problems that arise in the application.

III. SOME DIFFICULTIES

Consider, first, Corollary IV. I've proposed that we refer to this as the Principle of Discrimination, because it requires the critic to be discriminating, judicious in criticizing the argument. The sense of the principle is clear enough: the critic should focus attention on the most important flaws in the argument and avoid harping on peccadillos. The application may prove more troublesome, because how is the critic to decide which flaws are most significant? What criteria or guidelines are there to be used in weighing the flaws unearthed by analysis?[1]

So long as we consider only compact arguments, or "snippets" of reasoning, the problem can be avoided simply enough by listing all the flaws. But when we have to come mano a mano with real arguments (editorials, opinion pieces, etc., which may run to 2,500 words or more), the problem becomes acute. For we can easily imagine that analysis will have located a number of logical flaws. Some, no doubt, will be more serious than others, but how will it be decided which of them are serious (and therefore deserve prominence in the final critique) and which are inconsequential (and therefore should be dropped)?

A case in point. In Logical Self-Defense, Blair and I provided a detailed analysis of a 10-paragraph argument about capital punishment. In that analysis, we fingered no less than 7 flaws--fallacies--in the argument: two cases of improper appeal to authority, two cases of dubious assumption, two cases of hasty conclusion, and one instance of a problematic premise. Here is how we ended our critique:

> Our appraisal of LaFave's argument has turned up a medley of fallacies. We emphasize two things about this analysis. First, at no point can

> we claim to have decisively refuted his argument, and we've certainly not demonstrated that the main conclusion is false. Second, at least as we have tried to employ it, the charge of fallacy serves to extend the argument, not cut off debate. Uncovering the fallacies we have found in LaFave's argument invites the search for more information, additional evidence, amplification. (200)

While having no quarrel here with what we said there, I do think it important to point out what we did not say. Which of the medley of fallacies was most grievous? The analysis fails to answer that question, and thereby fails to abide by the Principle of Discrimination which requires that the criticisms be ordered from more serious to less. If the critique is to serve the purposes mentioned in the quoted passage, it cannot rest content with simple itemization of flaws. The critic has a larger task.

Those who select fallacy theory as the matrix of informal analysis can deal with the demands of the Principle of Discrimination quite readily. For fallacies can be ranked in degrees of strength, if you will. A charge of hasty conclusion is a stronger, more serious charge than a charge of problematic premise, while a charge of irrelevant reason is in turn stronger than hasty conclusion. The notion of strength here is roughly this: How much recasting must the argument undergo if the charge is warranted? In the case of irrelevant reason, the offending premise must be dropped entirely and some other suitable candidate found. In the case of hasty conclusion, the extant premise(s) must be supplemented by additional evidence, but the evidence already presented has not been challenged. In the case of problematic premise, defense must be offered for some undefended premise. Since that defense may be ready to hand, this charge forces the minimum revision. Of course, ordering the various fallacy charges in degrees of strength is not sufficient to meet the demands of discrimination, for one must also consider how important a role a given branch of argument plays in the entire tree.[2] However, my purpose here is not to defend fallacy theory as the proper matrix for informal analysis but rather to point to the pressing need for a developed theory of criticism for informal logic.

If informal logic is to be an autonomous branch of logical inquiry, and if informal analysis is to be practiced effectively, then it seems to follow that it must have its own range of standards and criteria to be used in assessing an argument's merits. Until those have been articulated in a coherent theory, attempts to apply the Principle of Discrimination will, I'm afraid, be rather more arbitrary than one would like to admit.

Problems arise in the application of Corollary III also. Consider the example used by Scriven in Reasoning: "She's a redhead, so she's probably quick tempered." What is the proper way to formulate the missing premise here? After considering and rejecting several possible candidates, Scriven finally settles on this one: "Most redheaded women are quick tempered." Scriven's candidate is surely preferable to, for example, this one: "All redheaded women are quick-tempered." For this latter candidate is much stronger a premise than is actually required, given the force that the term "probably" is meant to have. Hence the arguer can get by here with less than a universally quantified statement which would be much harder, one supposes, to justify.

But is Scriven's candidate the best one? It seems to me that the arguer would have a far more difficult time defending it than he or she would defending this stronger candidate: "Most redheads are quick tempered." My proposed missing premise is stronger, because it covers a wider class (both men and women) and commits the arguer to more. On the other hand, I would argue that mine is also more plausible. To defend it, the arguer would likely be forced into some (quite possibly dubious) speculation about the relationship between hair colour and temper. To defend Scriven's candidate, the arguer would still have to do this but now the speculation would have to include another component: sex. In other words, to defend Scriven's candidate, the arguer would have to show why in the case of women, but not in the case of men, having red hair is a property that co-occurs with having a quick temper. Thus, here is an instance where adding the weakest candidate seems to involve the arguer in unnecessary risks, which violate the spirit of the Principle of Charity. Of course, as we have worded the corollary, this example does not gainsay it, for the corollary directs us to provide the weakest possible candidate "sufficient to express the missing premise." Still, I believe there are some real difficulties to be reckoned with in the application of this corollary, and most of them involve the as-yet unanalyzed concepts of strength and weakness as these apply to potential missing premises.

Corollary II presents a different kind of problem. The best way I can illustrate the problem is with an example. In January, 1981, the U.S. Senate held hearings to review the appointees to the Reagan cabinet. William French Smith, the nominee for Attorney-General, was questioned by some senators about his membership in the California Club of Los Angeles and the Bohemian Club of San Francisco. Both clubs discriminate against women, blacks, and other minorities, and some senators and others thought that Smith, as chief law enforcement officer ought not to be a member of such clubs. Smith's reply:

> I do not think that we have reached the point in this country where membership in an all-man's club, an all-woman's club, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, all women's colleges or the Davis Cup Team should be viewed as evidence of discrimination.

In this context, I believe this statement is rightly interpreted as a premise leading to the conclusion that Smith is justified in not resigning his membership in those clubs.

As a premise, this statement is open to obvious criticism on several grounds. In the first place, Smith is playing fast and loose with the notion of membership. One is not a member of the Davis Cup Team in the sense

that one is a member of the California Club. Nor does one "belong to" an all-woman's college. But this is not the major point. How can one compare the Davis Cup Team to the California Club? Segregation occurs in tennis, where it does occur, for the good of the sport. And it does not appear to be a form of segregation that anyone objects mightily to. In the case of the California Club, the segregation serves no higher purpose and is objected to by many. The same sort of criticisms could be pressed, one supposes, against the other elements in Smith's analogy: The Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, all-women's colleges. According to Corollary II and to Scriven, we should "reinterpret the passage slightly to make more sense out of it" (71). But doing so would require that we delete all references except those to the clubs, so that the premise gets reformulated:

> I do not think that we have reached the point in this country where membership in an all-man's or all-woman's club . . . should be viewed as evidence of discrimination.

But now the statement carries considerably less clout, and indeed the argument seems to have virtually disappeared before our very eyes. Not only that, but it seems to me that we have gone beyond the bounds of charity here. Why should we delete or overlook specious reasoning simply because it seems obviously specious? (In this particular instance, I believe that pointing out the flaw in the analogies will not be as simple as it may appear.) If that indeed was Smith's reasoning, then he ought to "face the music" --not have his false notes edited out by the critic. There must be some room to maneuver here between, on the one hand, cheap shots and nit-picking, and, on the other hand, just ignoring blatantly poor reasoning. Benefit of the doubt, si; whitewash, no!

The point of this section has merely been to try to indicate that there are problems connected with the application of the Principle of Charity and its corollaries. They are not, I think, insuperable problems. But rather than attempt their solution, I leave that to others and move on now to a different point.

IV. CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

Effective argument analysis can be a gruelling task. If the argument has any degree of complexity, the critic may find himself or herself confronted with hermeneutic tasks at four different levels: identification, reconstruction (elimination of clutter and supplying missing premises) and criticism. At each level, various interpretations of what's going on may have to be seen, then developed, then weighed and considered and finally discarded. All this in addition to the other tasks facing the critic which we have not mentioned.

If the passage under consideration is clearly an argument put forth by what I shall call the serious arguer (someone who knows the ins and outs of the argumentative process, who has put some structure into the argument, has marshalled the evidence, etc.), and provided the issue is a serious one, well, then one has no choice but to go through the exercise from start to finish, giving the argument the scrutiny it deserves.

But such arguments are not the norm. Many is the time that I have found myself wrestling with diffuse and poorly expressed arguments that seem to have been sloppily put together--something dashed off in five minutes by a loose reasoner with scant knowledge of the demands of the argumentative process. This is a frustrating experience, and lately I have found myself wondering whether it is worth my effort.

Indeed, what seems to happen, in such cases, is that the original argument serves merely as a prototype around which I, as critic, driven by the Principle of Charity, work my magic. I wind up with a reconstructed edition of the original which bears very little resemblance to the original--indeed, almost an entirely new argument. Now this is something Scriven appears ready to endorse, for he writes:

> That is, even if as a matter of strict grammar, we could shoot the writer down for having said something that isn't true or doesn't follow, it may be more charitable to reinterpret the passage slightly in order to make more "sense" out of it; that is, to make it mean something that a sensible person would be more likely to have really meant. (71)

Here I balk. This is not charity; it is welfare! This is no longer argument analysis and criticism; it is argument construction, taking the skeleton provided by someone else and expecting the critic to provide the flesh and blood.

Instead, I propose a restriction on the application of the Principle of Charity, prompted by the old saw that "charity begins at home." It is this: the heavy artillery of argument analysis, monitored by the requirements of the Principle of Charity, is to be pressed into service only when one confronts (i) a fully expressed argument (ii) from a serious arguer (iii) on a serious matter. (I add the obvious qualification: this restriction is meant to apply to the argumentative process, not the pedagogical. The teacher of informal logic remains, alas, under the obligation of treating students' analyses as if they fulfilled all three conditions. Sometimes, thank God, they do.)

In defense of this proposal, let me make two points. First, the individual who dashes off a poorly expressed argument is, in all probability, not going to derive any profit from the critic's labourious undertaking. His or her commitment to the rational process is too slight and powers of reasoning too undeveloped (else we would not be in this situation in the first place). There are other ways of dealing with such discourse. Second, the critic suffers the frustration of having to deal with some amorphous piece of reasoning when that time and effort could no doubt be better invested somewhere else.

Not everyone who cries "Lord! Lord!" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, so Scripture has it. Likewise, I say unto you, not everyone who cries "since" and "therefore" has entered the realm of argument proper. As critics, our obligations under the Principle of Char-

ity are grave, but they should be honoured only in the case of real and serious arguments.

If this proposal has merit, then two tasks remain. First, we need to develop criteria that will enable us to identify, readily, the serious arguer. I don't believe that will be hard to do. Second, we must develop a logical strategy for handling the other sort of "argument": the poorly expressed one from the loose reasoner's offering. Let us, then, reserve the use of the term "argument" for the serious case, and classify those others as "expression of opinion." If we follow this path, then we will find ourselves forced to develop what I have called "the logic of opinion." But that is a development which, I have argued elsewhere and on other grounds, is desperately needed.[3] ❋

NOTES

1. The bite of this question signals an important difference between formal and informal analysis of arguments. Formal analysis reveals invalidity as the only flaw, and presumably one invalidity is no more and no less consequential than another.

2. I have dealt with this question in another paper, "The Shape We're In," (forthcoming).

3. Cf. my paper, "Remarks on the Logic of Opinion," (forthcoming).

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Ad Hominem and Ad Verecundiam

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In this paper I want to argue (a) that there is something puzzling about the ad hominem fallacy and the ad verecundiam fallacy, (b) that this puzzlement is reflected in the sorts of things that writers of introductory books have to say about them and (c) the explanation of this puzzlement is that what makes ad hominem and ad verecundiam arguments fallacious, where they are fallacious, is not what most people think it is.

Suppose that a Dr. Smith has said that there is an as yet undetected planet in the solar system and that a Mr. Jones has said there is not. Suppose further that a Mr. Edwards says that it is highly likely that there is an extra planet, for Smith who has said that there is, is a highly respected mathematician and astronomer while Jones, who has said that there is not, belongs to a religious sect that strongly believes that there are only seven planets. Now on the one hand, we would feel that there is a fallacy involved here, for statements about the expertise of Smith and the religious beliefs of Jones seem unrelated to the claim that there is another planet. What we expect are statements about peculiarities in the orbits of the planets we are already acquainted with. But on the other hand, it does seem reasonable to accept that it is likely that there is another planet if the leading authorities believe that there is and the only skeptics turn out to be religious cranks.

This tension is reflected in what many writers of introductory textbooks of logic have had to say about ad hominem and appeal to authority arguments. For example Copi[1] introduces them as fallacies but then modifies this claim in a number of ways. He distinguishes between what he calls circumstantial ad hominem arguments and abusive ad hominem arguments and says that the latter are not always invalid. He does not, however, tell us how we are to distinguish between those that are valid and those that are not. Even though ad verecundiam is introduced as a fallacy, Copi hastens to inform us on page 95 that there is only a fallacy if the person appealed to is not really an authority. For example, if a movie star tells us in a commercial that we should eat a certain breakfast because of its dietary ingredients.

The same ambivalence is found in Carney and Scheer's Fundamentals of Logic (Macmillan, 1965). They begin their account of the ad hominem fallacy by saying, "(it) is committed when the conclusion of the argument states that a view is mistaken, and the reasons given for this conclusion amount to no more than a criticism of the person or persons maintaining the view" (p. 20). They continue by giving three examples of ad hominem arguments (p. 21) but seem to be of two minds as to whether they are good examples and conclude by saying, "It should not be overlooked that not all arguments criticizing a man are fallacious" (p. 22).

Not only do we find tension in what people have to say about ad hominem and ad verecundiam arguments we also find disagreement between what people have to say. For example, T. E. Damer in Attacking Fallacious Reasoning (Wadsworth, 1980), says concerning the ad hominem, "Even though the abusive claims about one's opponent may be true, those facts are irrelevant to the worth of his or her point-of-view, for even the most despicable of persons may be able to construct sound arguments" (p. 79). While W. C. Salmon in Logic (Prentice-Hall, Second edition, 1973) considers ad hominem arguments a valid subspecies of inductive arguments! The disagreement that exists concerning ad verecundiam arguments is